

[Janice]

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

Col. F. C. Harrington. Administrator

Maj. B. [M?]. Harloe, Assistant Administrator

Henry S. Alsberg, Director of the Federal Writers' Project Life History

Interview with:

Miss Carolyn Bell

Katherine Court Apts.

Macon, Georgia

By:

Annie A. Rose

Federal Writers' Project

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Jan. 9, 1939 Janice

Up the two long, steep flights of stairs in the building used by the WPA in Macon, to the little partitioned off space in which she works, came Carolyn Janice jauntily this morning. She carries her rather tall, beautifully developed body in a queenly manner. Auburn curls frame her smiling face, the beauty of which is greatly enhanced by a complexion any woman would envy. Soft, large brown eyes, a well shaped mouth and gleaming white teeth — all these points add up to make a girl much above the average in appearance and personality.

“Come on over and have a cigaret, Carolyn Janice , before you start exercising your typewriter,” I called. “All right, I guess I can,” was her answer. “All my reports are finished, and Mr. [Lepzer?] Upshaw won't be in till this afternoon.” So fortified by Lucky Strikes and cold, bottled Coca-Colas, I asked Carolyn Janice a few questions and she told me of her life.

“I was born in Moultrie,” she began, “the youngest of five children. I have two brothers and two sisters. When I was only nine months old, my father, who was educated to be a

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lawyer, decided to move to Macon. We lived in a house on College street and it's been on that street that I've lived practically all my 2 life. My mother and Abbie Tommy (her father) were always devoted to each other and we all had a happy home life as children. That is, until my father's serious illness came. Since then, we've only known privations and hardships. When I was young, Abbie Tommy was jolly and good-natured, but he's been sick so long that now he's nervous and irritable. I can't get along with him. That's the reason I don't live at home. As long as I can go by and spend an hour or so with him every few days we respect each other and things are swell. But I tried living there after my divorce and he was eternally criticizing me every time I had a date. I don't do anything wrong, I only went to have a good time; I'm only twenty-one, you know, but I guess he's afraid that I'll make a fool of myself again by marrying somebody else like Duke. Clyde. I'm not going to repeat that mistake, but he doesn't trust me, so [Florence?] Davis Annette Gray (another WPA girl) and I rent a room together. I'm not at home to irritate him and we both are happier." Carolyn Janice speaks highly of her father's intelligence, has a great respect for his training in legal matters, and [having?] heard her say that he was an invalid, I asked her to tell me about him.

"Well, it happened when I was a little girl about six years old," she began, Margaret Katherine , my oldest sister, was a senior at [Wesleyan?], the other children were in high school or grammar school. Abbie Tommy was desperately ill; he had a tumor on the brain and no one thought that he would survive the operation. He did, of course as you 3 know, but in performing the operation, the surgeon cut a nerve and so he has been paralyzed ever since. That was when our hard times began. There was my mother with five children and a sick husband. My father had some insurance but it wasn't enough to take care of all of us, much less pay for the care and attention that Abbie he needed. Mother didn't know what to do; she was not trained for work outside the home, and if she had been, she couldn't have made enough to hire a nurse for Abbie Tommy and take care of us. So after much thought and worry over the situation, Margaret Katherine borrowed enough money

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to finish her work at [Wesleyan?], the boys got jobs delivering the Telegraph so they could continue school, and in some way we managed to live through that year.

“When Margaret Katherine graduated at Wesleyan she got a position as teacher and was able to help us all. She's always been fine, never a thought for herself—just always planning how she could help us. The other children did their part, too, but Margaret Katherine always been like another mother to me. Just as soon as one or us would finish school, he or she would get work and help the rest of us.

“When I was about sixteen I graduated from high school here, and Margaret, Katherine, Mother and Abbie Tommy decided that I should go to Winthrop College in Rock Hill, S.C. Margaret Katherine was teaching there then still is, in fact, and I was thrilled to go.

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“That was where I met Duke, Clyde, the boy I married. He lives in Rock Hill; his father is a merchant there. He was a cute boy and lots of fun and I fell for him like nobody's business. We were together lots but nearly always there was a crowd and Margaret Katherine didn't suspect that we were in love and planning to marry. When school ended Margaret Katherine and I came to Macon where we spent the summer. But by September Mother and Abbie Tommy were planning to move to Rock Hill, too. All the other children were gone from home and they decided that it would be cheaper and better for the four of us to live together in Rock Hill. And was I glad to see Duke Clyde when we arrived in Rock Hill!!! We decided to marry during the Christmas holidays but he didn't tell his parents and I didn't tell mine or Margaret Katherine till about the middle of December. We delayed telling them because we knew there'd be plenty of fireworks when they heard the news, and believe me, we were not a bit wrong. Honestly, I think if [Mother?] hadn't been so fat she would have gone up in the air and Abbie Tommy being paralyzed was all that saved him, I'm sure. But Duke Clyde and I were firm, we just kept saying that we were going to be married and that was all there was to it. They never did give their consent but at Christmas

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they all gave me pretty underclothes and I knew by that that they wouldn't interfere very much."

"Did you run away, Carolyn Janice ," I asked. "No, Duke Clyde wanted me to", she replied, "but I refused.

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We were not doing anything to be ashamed of and I insisted on being married at home. We married two days after Christmas; Duke's Clyde's father and mother were there, Margaret Katherine , Mother and Abbie Tommy and two or three of our young friends. Our parents accepted the situation and tried to make the best of it. Duke Clyde and I lived with his father and mother. Duke Clyde was working for his father, who was very nice to us but his mother didn't like me one bit. I think she must have been jealous. Duke Clyde was her only child, just nineteen years old and I don't blame her for not wanting him to marry; but I do blame her for making my life unpleasant. I loved Duke Clyde ; he loved me. I wish things had been different.

"I quit school when I was married and I had nothing to do all day. Duke's Clyde's mother wouldn't let me help her with the house and since I have always had too much energy and intelligence to be contented with nothing to do all day but fix my hair and my nails, I was very bored. So I decided I'd go back to school when the new semester opened in February. Duke Clyde was willing and gave me the money for my tuition and books. But things got so unpleasant at home that I told Duke Clyde I thought we ought to be by ourselves. We rented two rooms to live in and moved out. When I'd come home in the afternoons I'd clean up and cook supper. But Duke Clyde and I soon got to quarreling. He'd be real late for supper and if it was cold when he got home he'd throw the dishes on the floor and march out and perhaps stay all night. I know a lot of it all was my fault; 6 my hair's not red for nothing, you know, and I guess he had lots to take from me. I won't bore you by going into all that. He was the most selfish, unreasonable, spoilt person I ever knew. He wouldn't let me go to see Mother and Abbie Tommy at all; he said their being

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against him was the cause of all our trouble. Maybe part of that was true but his Mother's attitude certainly didn't help us a bit.

“By the time I had finished my Junior year at college I knew we just couldn't continue living together the way things were between us. So I told Margaret Katherine I wanted a divorce. She arranged for me to go out to Little Rock and live with my brother while I was getting a divorce. She gave me money and I was down at the station ready to leave when Duke Clyde heard about it, so he came racing down to the station and made a terrible scene. I was terribly embarrassed but I didn't go back home with him. I told him I was through and I meant it. There was no use in spoiling the rest of our lives just because we had made the mistake of getting married.

“Well, for a while I was pretty miserable out in Little Rock. I kept wondering if I was really doing the right thing and Duke Clyde wrote letters all the time, begging me to come back which kept me upset. But I stayed. We had already spoiled everything that could have been beautiful in our marriage by that everlasting quarreling. My brother and his sweetheart were so good to me; they never offered advice or interfered. They just took me places and tried to make me have a good time. And I 7 did. After a while I stopped worrying; I felt that what I was doing was for the best and I enjoyed the rest of my stay there.

“I don't know how I would ever have managed without Margaret Katherine though. She gave me money to come on to Macon. Mother and Abbie Tommy had moved back here then and I lived with them and went to G.A.B. (business school.) After I finished my course at G.A.B. I got a job with Moffett Sims Transfer Co. for \$10.00 a week. I managed to live on what I was making and would have stayed on with Mr. Moffett Sims if he had been willing to pay me more after I had worked for him long enough to expect a raise. I surely worked hard for that ten dollars a week. I was there at 8.30 in the morning and had to stay until the trucks were in at night, which was often as late as 8 or 9 o'clock. I was supposed to have Saturday afternoons off but just as sure as I made some plans for that time Mr.

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Moffett Sims would keep me real late. When I heard about this place at the WPA I went after it with all my might. Mr. Moffett Sims raised a commotion about the WPA hiring someone who had a job, but since he refused to raise my salary and the WPA officials knew that what he was paying me was not enough they gave me the place. I get \$80.00 \$75.00 now and have been able to get a few clothes that I badly needed. My main fear now is that the WPA will fold up and then where will we all be?"

Since that question is the one over which countless thousands of WPA workers are worrying, and since I was unable to give a satisfactory answer, Carolyn Janice 8 closed her visit, saying that she must get back to her job while there is a job there for her.